



Department of Justice

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EIGHT MEN CHARGED WITH FOOD STAMP AND WIC PROGRAM FRAUD
Indictment alleges fraud of more than \$1.5 million

COLUMBUS – A federal grand jury here has charged in three separate indictments eight Columbus residents who operated specialty markets in Columbus, alleging that they fraudulently redeemed benefits from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Stamp and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programs between January, 2002 and August 2006. Some are also charged with money laundering and subscribing to false income tax returns.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Don Meeks, Special Agent in Charge, Midwest Region, Chicago, U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General; and Jose Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, Cincinnati Field Office announced the three indictments returned under seal on January 10 and unsealed today after USDA and IRS agents arrested six of the eight defendants.

One indictment contains nine counts alleging conspiracy to defraud the United States, Food Stamp Fraud, Unlawful Food Stamp Redemptions, two counts of WIC Program Fraud, two counts of theft of public funds and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. The indictment also seeks forfeiture of all real or personal property involved in the crimes.

The first indictment names 6 men:
Khalif Mohamed Abukar, age unknown
Zeidi Said Omar, age 44
Saidi Kadi Sheikuna, age 36
Ali Ahmed Said, age 45
Abdulahakim Said Abukar, 35
Shuceeb Geedi, 50

Khalif Mohamed Abukar and Saidi Kadi Sheikuna remain at large. All others were arrested on Friday, January 25 and were released on bond after an initial appearance before a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

The indictment alleges that Khalif Mohamed Abukar, Zeidi Said Omar, Saidi Kadi Sheikuna, Ali Ahmed Said, and Shuceeb Geedi owned, operated and managed City Dollar Store,

a Somali specialty market located at 3350 Cleveland Avenue. On or about December 22, 2000, then store manager, Ali Ahmed Said, obtained a food stamp license for City Dollar Store. The license remained in effect through September 20, 2005 when Ali Ahmed Said purchased the market and applied for a new license which remained in effect through August 8, 2006.

The indictment alleges that Abdulhakim Said Abukar owned, operated or managed Marwaas Market, a Somali specialty market located at 4181 West Broad Street in Columbus. Store manager Khalif Mohamed Abukar obtained authorization for Marwaas Market to participate in the WIC program on or about August 24, 2003.

The indictment alleges that the co-defendants bought Food Stamp benefits with cash, accepted Food Stamp benefits as payment for ineligible items, and accepted Food Stamp benefits from customers as payment on loans obtained from the markets.

A second indictment, containing 16 counts, charges Muhammad Hussein, age 40, who did business as Ohio Grocery and Halal Meats, Inc., 2815 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, with Food Stamp Fraud, Unlawful Food Stamp redemptions, WIC Program Fraud, Theft of Public Monies, five counts of money laundering, six counts of subscribing a false income tax return and forfeiture. Hussein is accused of allowing customers to swap benefit coupons for cash and allowing them to be used on non-authorized products. Hussein was arrested on Friday, January 25 and was released on bond after an initial appearance before a U.S. Magistrate Judge.

The third indictment, containing eight counts, charges Ahmed S. Jama, 30, who did business as Muna Market, 3770 West Broad Street, Columbus, with Food Stamp Fraud, Unlawful Food Stamp redemptions, WIC Program Fraud, Theft of Public Monies, money laundering, two counts of subscribing a false income tax return and forfeiture. Jama was also arrested on Friday, January 25 and released on bond.

Food Stamp Fraud and Money Laundering Conspiracy are each punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. Theft of Public Funds carries a maximum possible sentence of ten years. All other crimes alleged in the indictment have five-year statutory maximum sentences.

“An indictment is merely an accusation,” Lockhart said. “All defendants should be presumed innocent until and unless convicted in a court of law.”

Lockhart also commended the cooperative investigation by USDA Office of Inspector General and Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation agents and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dave Bosley, who is prosecuting the case.

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Case Numbers 2:08-cr-007, 2:08-cr-008, 2:08-cr-009